

Lesson 1 – Introduction to Social Media

“I know what you did last weekend.....!”

Could it be that your contacts know what you did before you have had chance to tell them?
Could they know all at once whether they are on LinkedIn, Twitter, or Facebook or via a blog.
Or in fact does your employer already know too?

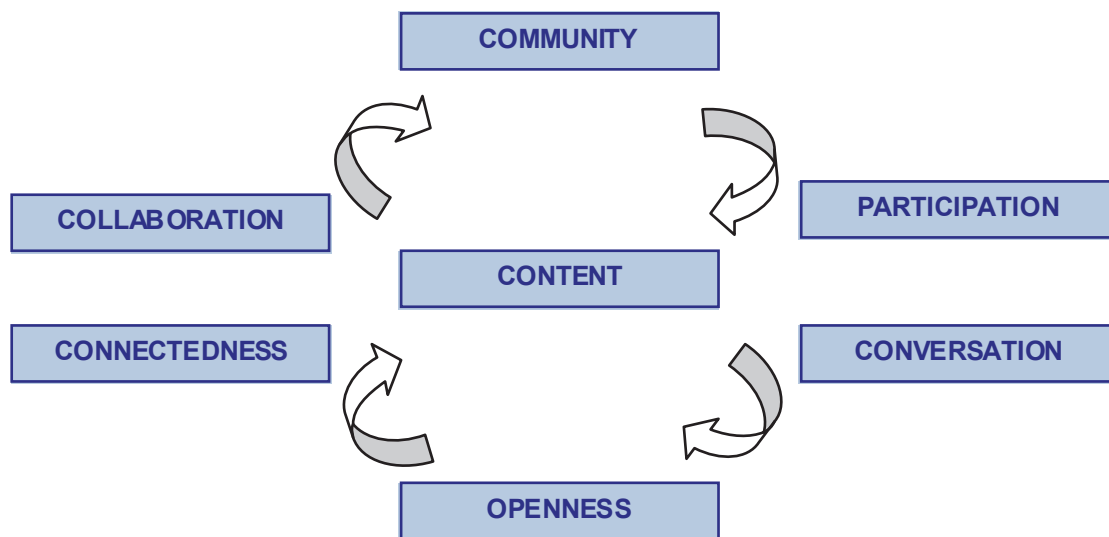
This is simply a fact of life, that social media can inform and share instantly across different media platforms and you may or may not have originated the content.

The challenge for today’s brands, businesses and individuals using social media, is who do you want to be, where? With employers, data owners and companies trawling the web for information, it’s important to know that your profile or activity can be collated together.

What is social media?

According to the Chartered Institute of Public Relations (CIPR), Social Media is

“...internet and mobile based channels and tools that allow users to interact with each other and share opinions and content. social media involves the building of communities or networks and encouraging participation and engagement.”



Source: Mayfield (2008) and Royle (2011)

The social media characteristics (Mayfield 2008) shown above **represent a dynamic, evolving context**, with live interactions by participants. It should be noted though that a small minority are often active, whilst many 'lurk' watching, listening and learning from conversations.

When embarking on social media, it is worth breaking these characteristics down to their constituent parts – how can you harness their benefits?

The **community** can be created by individuals or an organisation. Like a living village, the aim of the community is a shared interest or need. With LinkedIn you can create a group and individuals can ask to join; alternatively, prospective members can voluntarily join a group with no membership restrictions. It is therefore either **voluntary or permission-based membership**.

The degree of **openness** can affect levels of participation; the more open, the more likely participation is to be higher. This affects levels of trust too. If the social media encourages sharing, then votes, comments and debate take on a life of their own. This feedback and involvement is vital to sustain a community. Lock-outs through

passwords hinder the free flow of information and can hinder sharing.

The **energy** around a social media (for example, a blog or tweet) evidences the amount of **connectedness** it fuels. The number of fans and followers are indicative of interest, though they do not signify depth of relationship or level of activity. These need to be enlivened with regular updates or posts so that participants can 'like' content or refer to links to other resources, sites or people (blogs or profiles).

From the above, it is clear that **participation** is driven often by **content** and **conversations**.

Rather than using interruption marketing (look-at-me now adverts or communications), social media fulfils a need from an **active information seeker**. This creates a two-way **dialogue**. Control cannot be assumed by the **brand or community owner** as **participation** is voluntary and flexible.

As participants can **collaborate**, **content** takes on a new purpose; it can be adapted to suit their needs. The only certainty is that change is a constant. Innovation is a necessity.

Why does social media matter to business?

No organisation, irrespective of size, is immune from the social media explosion. Larger firms tend to experience the first wave of engagement and with bigger impact. The lessons they learn are useful for individuals and small, medium and large organisations too.

According to research conducted by Weber Shandwick and Forbes Insights (2011), Global executives believe that 65% of their brand's reputation will come from its online socialability by 2014. That's an anticipated increase of 13% from 2011. It will probably be faster and larger growth too. This reputational dynamic and rapid pace of social media means that organisations have to become expert at social media rapidly.

However, one of the dilemmas they face is how to manage the data explosion. At present, **93% of global companies are using at least one social media tool**, but only 63% have integrated it with their marketing communications strategies. Added to this, 66% of global firms have experienced negative online commentary on a **daily basis**. The integration and volume of information dilemmas will not disappear.

Global firms do strongly believe that social media is vital to **enhance customer loyalty and brand reputation**. However, you can't build loyalty unless you have a **relationship** with customers and to build that, you need to have **interaction**. In the meantime, **customer perceptions** can be influenced by **word of mouse (mouth)** comments which then impact on **reputations**.

So this social media guide will explore the hows and whys of relationship-building through social media.

Case study

If you don't play the guitar, then you may have never heard of Dave Carroll and his *Taylor* guitar. In fact Dave Carroll wasn't well known then. But in March 2008, his guitar was broken by United Airlines baggage handlers and the story went global in 2009. It also shows the impact of social media

How so? For nine months, Dave tried to get United to pay for repairs to his guitar, to the tune of \$1,200. But having been round the houses, United refused to pay. So he wrote a song and released it on YouTube. Of course you might think that would be it, but the lyrics told the sorry tale of his broken guitar. Now take a look at the statistics:

1 million views on **YouTube**, within four days of song release, this rose to **3 million views** in total. Within two days, Los Angeles Times and CNN had interviewed Dave and he was conducting around 12 interviews a day, keeping the story in the spotlight. 100 bloggers a day alerted readers to the footage within four days

David Meerman Scott tweeted the story with an embedded link to the video to his 20,000 followers. They were soon joined by coverage in the Wall Street Journal, USA Today, on CBS, Fox channels too. Every time, the You Tube footage spiked higher.

The BBC interviewed Dave and the song was released on iTunes, in tandem with lots more interviews on radio. The song became the **number one** (country & western download) in the UK.

Whilst United was slow to react, Taylor Guitars responded within 24 hours and offered a *free replacement guitar*. They then posted a video on YouTube on how to pack guitars. The simple, no frills video oozed sincerity and the personal dedication to their guitars and musicians. All the time United were silent.

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Not one to miss an opportunity, after a tip-off, the President of Carlton Cases for professional Musicians stepped in. Jim Laffoley offered Dave a set of cases for his band's next tour. But in conversation both Jim and Dave realised a commercial opportunity – a range of branded cases. With a clever price point (\$725), Dave earned a royalty for each sale and musicians got access to a high quality protective case at an attractive price.

Whilst Dave's guitar only cost \$3,500 originally, the subsequent activity has netted him far more. The reputational damage to United is far in excess of the cost of buying a new guitar.



Adapted from source: Meerman Scott (2011)

So what went wrong?

Slow reaction of a large corporate, with a rigid policy spread across departments. Poor communications handling and advice, perhaps hoping it would go away. Panic from customer care staff and an overly restrictive legal department. None of whom were aware of the power of social media and an agile customer complainant.

What does an organisation need to respond? Agility, empathy, in-built alert system, confidence with social media tools and the humility to respond promptly and appropriately.

What types of social media?

There are many forms of social media, which have grown exponentially and continue to grow. That said, social media forms do come and go and some wane in popularity. For example, MySpace once competed on a peer basis with Facebook, but is now a niche music sharing social media platform.

Social media	Participants / members / users
Facebook	800 million
YouTube	490 million
LinkedIn	100 million
Twitter	200 million
Google+	40 million

Individuals and organisations need to decide which platforms they plan to become involved with, based on what their customers, stakeholders and communities belong to. The following provides a guide:

Social networks

Ideal to connect with friends, colleagues, acquaintances, social networks offer personal pages was places to share views, news and opinions e.g. LinkedIn or Facebook.

Blogs

Online diaries, comment pieces or instructional advice, blogs offer regular updates in date order.

Microblogs

Limited to 140 characters with Twitter for example, these bite-sized blogs offer fast updates, links to news or content and pass along via viral or retweets. Why 140 characters? Usually a text message is 160 characters long, but Twitter retain 20 of these for the sender's name.

Forums

An online community that predates social media. Forums offer lively opportunities for debate around special interests or topics.

Bookmarking

A means to share useful web available resources by bookmarking the content. This means that the URL of a piece of web content is stored in the Favorites section of the user's web browser, allowing direct access. Alternatively, social bookmarking relates to tagging a link (to content)

with keywords for other web users to find, who may be searching for similar information or content. Popular bookmarking sites are Delicious, Stumbledupon and DiggIt.

Communities driven by content type

These follow the content users want to share, be it photographs, video or sharing links.

Wikis

Effectively a communal database or document(s), which contributors edit or provide content for and which are then shared among all participants.

Podcasts

These can be available on a free or paid-for basis and consist of video or audio files for download. They offer flexible, listen-again options, the most popular of which is Apple iTunes.

Mashups

This is the bringing together content of two or more previously unrelated items to create something new and contemporary. Often seen in music or on YouTube, mashups can relate to any combinations of documents.

User generated content

This is where the consumer creates something (there is no limit on creativity) which could be taking something existing and adapting it or creating something brand new. The Cadbury's Gorilla advert was widely amended by users to create fun and engaging new clips with music or content adjusted.

How do you decide what to do?

Deciding which social media to adopt can be challenging but the most important step is to find out where your target market goes or hangs out.

MarketingSherpa have developed a four-step social roadmap including:

Steps	Key actions
1. Research	Your audiences and what social media they use. Find out what they are saying
2. Objectives	Identify what you need to achieve
3. Actions	Define the key actions arising from the research findings

Source: Adapted from MarketingSherpa online